

LABORATORY BRIEFINGS

Drugs and Documents

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This month's issue focuses on the Drug Chemistry and Questioned Documents Sections. It will offer tips and suggestions on how to properly submit evidence for each section. Here are some quick facts about each section:

Drug Chemistry

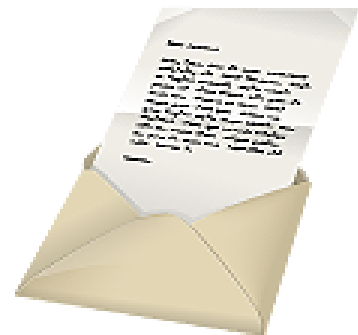
- One lab in Bemidji, one in St. Paul
- 13 scientists in section
- The Saint Paul Drug Chemistry section received 2,032 cases containing 3,224 items and reported 1,983 cases in 2009
- The Bemidji Drug Chemistry section received 850 cases containing 1,478 items and reported 853 cases in 2009

Questioned Documents

- Located in St. Paul
- 2 scientists in section
- The Forensic Document section reported on 66 cases in 2009
- Both examiners in Forensic Documents are members of MAFS (Midwestern Association of Forensic Scientists)



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December 10, 2009



Drug Chemistry: What to Send and How to Send it

As with most other sections of the lab, the Drug Chemistry Section has specific requirements regarding your submission and delivery of evidence. Below is a list for you to reference when submitting evidence to us.

This list is not necessarily all inclusive so please remember, if you are ever in doubt, give us a call!

Submission

Items NOT to submit:

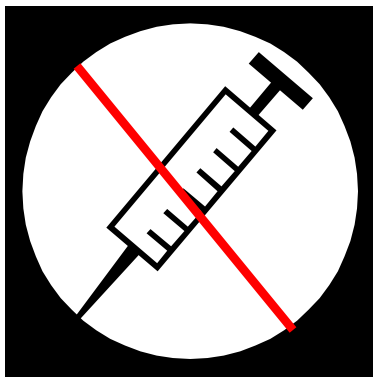
- Field test kits – used or unused
- Syringes – if a syringe is all you have, give us a call and we will work through a collection plan with you
- All liquids from a clan lab – instead, take representative samples and send the samples
- Items to be re-analyzed – if items previously analyzed by the lab are used in a controlled sale, please provide reference laboratory case numbers for the items and clearly identify which items were previously analyzed in your submittal paperwork!

Delivery

Evidence can be delivered to either laboratory by hand or by mail.

- By mail
 - Seal the evidence in a suitable mailing container – one case per container
 - Do NOT use a DWI kit to mail drug evidence!
 - Always send your evidence certified, insured or registered

Did you know you can find the most current, up-to date version of the Request Form on our website?



Regardless of the delivery method you choose, please include a BCA Analysis Request Form*. This form is a convenient way for you to be sure we have much of the necessary information we need to efficiently analyze your evidence, such as:

- Suspect's name
- Charge (possession, sales)
- Type of case
- County
- Officer who should receive the report – including contact information (phone/email) for the officer
- Court date, if known

**The most current version of the BCA Analysis Request Form is available on the BCA website*

Drug Chemistry Section Specific Requirements

Below is a list of good information to keep in mind while you prepare your suspected controlled substance evidence for transport.

1. Drug Chemistry scientists analyze only to the highest charging level as listed in the state statutes
2. If you have multiple items and multiple suspects, any information you provide that can link a suspect with a specific item will speed our analysis of your evidence
3. Please send paraphernalia/residue items ONLY if absolutely necessary
4. Do NOT field test trace items – if a controlled substance is present, you could use it up or wipe it off— leaving nothing for us to analyze!
5. Suspected Marijuana
 - a. These cases are only accepted if they have a trial date or a contested omnibus date
 - b. Make sure the suspected marijuana is DRY before submission!
6. Suspected Khat
 - a. The charging level for Khat is NOT weight dependent – send us 1 bundle NOT 100!
 - b. Keep suspected Khat FROZEN
7. Salt form determination is reported only for cases that will be federally prosecuted
8. Quantitation (purity determination) is performed only for cases that will be federally prosecuted
 - a. All cases requiring quantitation are analyzed at the St. Paul Lab
(To save our scientists time, please provide the contact information for the prosecuting attorney whenever possible!)

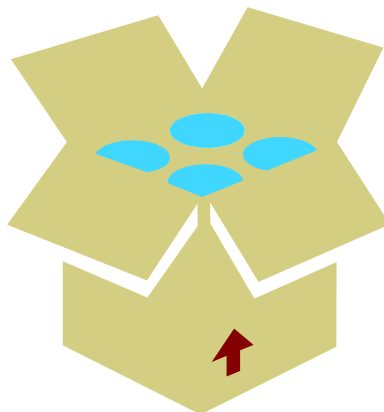
“The charging level for Khat is NOT weight dependent”



Drug Packaging

Now that you have a good idea what we will accept, let us take a moment to talk about packaging. Please consider the following guidelines:

- Do NOT mix drug types in one container – unless that is how you found them
- Package individual items of evidence in individual containers – NO heat-sealing the same plastic bag into “compartments”!
- Mark and identify each container with the following information
 - Agency case number*
 - Suspect name*
 - Dates (if multiple buys were conducted)*
 - Location where each piece of evidence was found (or the suspect it was taken from)*
- Please label suspected biohazards appropriately (body cavity samples, syringe contents, etc.)
- Keep items for separate defendants packaged separately
- As always, please seal appropriately!



Questioned Documents

The Forensic Document Section offers examinations including handwriting comparisons, printer and copier comparisons/examinations, ink and toner examinations, and the occasional typewriter examination. The primary evidence received is comprised of paper documents with requests to analyze the handwriting.

The following are tips for submitting evidence to the Forensic Document Section

Questioned vs. Known:

In order for a Forensic Document scientist to investigate whether a linkage exists between a victim and a suspect, it is imperative for our clients to collect the correct known and unknown evidence samples. For instance; if a questioned document bears upper and lower case printing, comparable words, letter combinations and/or numbers should be collected from a suspect by asking him/her to write in upper and lower case printing. Due to the variety of evidence a one page Collection and Packaging Guide was developed specifically for Forensic Document evidence. It is the first page of the BCA Guidelines for Obtaining Known Handwriting Samples Packet. Contact the Document section to obtain a copy or visit the BCA Laboratory website.

Packaging:

Here are some suggestions for the packaging of Forensic Document evidence.

“Post-It” notes are excellent for securing small items of evidence (staples, loose stamps, etc.). Fold the “Post-It” and place inside a small labeled envelope. Tape all seams of the envelope.

Label all containers/envelopes before placing the evidence in the container/envelope.

Submit each item in a separate envelope/paper bag that is size appropriate.

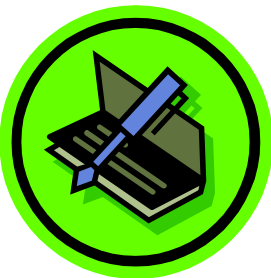
Evidence that has been exposed to moist environments, especially biological fluid, needs to be air dried before packaging in an envelope/paper bag. The envelope/paper bag needs to be taped along the seams so that trace evidence cannot fall out of the packaging. The package/envelope needs to be marked as possibly containing biological or hazardous material.

Avoid the use of plastic bags as they do not ‘breathe’ which may foster mold and bacterial growth, greatly hindering an analysis.

Place paper documents that may need indented writing impression examinations between two pieces of cardboard prior to placing in an envelope, box or paper bag. Tape all seams of the outer container.

When questioned writing appears on surfaces that cannot be brought into the lab, photographs need to be taken using oblique lighting and should include a ruler for scale. Whenever possible, take photos from a perpendicular position (90 degree angle). CDs containing digital images including dates and times can be submitted as evidence.

If there are any questions about appropriate known and unknown evidence collection, do not hesitate to call...even if you are on the scene; day or night. This can be accomplished by calling **BCA Communications at 651-793-7000** and then requesting to be connected with Lisa Hanson’s home phone.



Notification of Court Dates

As soon as you are aware of a court date for your case, **please** take the time to notify the section working on the case. Scientists are often working dozens of cases at once and we need enough advance notice to complete the laboratory work and review process.

Please do not assume that since the county attorney notified you of a court date, they made us aware of it as well! In order to better serve you and all of the agencies we provide laboratory services to,

communication is key!



BUREAU OF CRIMINAL APPREHENSION

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St. Paul, MN
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Phone:
651-793-2900

37 N. Norris Court NW
Bemidji, MN
56601

Phone:
218-755-6600

UPDATE: EVIDENCE INTAKE HOURS

Please note – operating hours for evidence intake are:

Monday through Friday 8:00AM to 3:00PM

EVIDENCE EVIDENCE EVIDENCE

Name of Agency

Name of Agency

Name of Agency